

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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Are There Pesticides In My Soap???

Take a look at your personal care products in your home. If one of the active ingredients is Triclosan, then the answer is “yes”. This chlorinated chemical is an antimicrobial, and is also registered as a pesticide by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Triclosan and Triclocarban (also a chlorinated chemical) can be found in dish soap, hand soap, cleaning products, toothpaste, deodorant and even cutting boards, utensils and toys.

Is it necessary?

US consumers spend almost \$1 billion a year on antibacterial products. Yet the use of such products has lead consumers down a path that could be harmful to their body and the environment. According to a leading microbiologist at the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), there currently is no evidence that over-the-counter antibacterial soap products are any more effective at preventing illness than washing with plain soap and water. There are indications, however, that certain ingredients in these soaps may contribute to bacterial resistance to antibiotics, and may have unanticipated hormonal effects that are of concern to the FDA. Ongoing issues surrounding the use of these antimicrobials have led the FDA to propose a rule that will require manufacturers provide more substantial data to demonstrate the safety and effectiveness of antibacterial soaps.¹

The EPA regulates the use of triclosan as a pesticide, and is in the process of updating its assessment of the effects of triclosan when it is used in pesticides. Based on the EPA monitoring data, triclosan was found in approximately 36 US streams where effluent from activated sludge wastewater treatment plants, trickle-down filtration, and sewage overflow appear to contribute to the occurrence of triclosan in open water.² The FDA and the EPA are working together to study the effects of this substance on animal and environmental health.

What can we do?

The good news for consumers is that many manufacturers are already taking steps to voluntarily remove these active ingredients from some products. So, what else can we consumers do to eliminate or reduce these chemical from our lives? Before purchasing personal care products, be sure to check the label. There are other choices on the market. And remember, one of the easiest defenses against germs is to use good old soap and water. You should wash your hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds each time. You can make hand washing fun by singing “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” to be sure you are washing long enough. And don’t forget to turn off the water while you are singing!

¹<http://www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm378393.htm>

²http://www.epa.gov/oppsrrd1/REDs/factsheets/triclosan_fs.htm

Link to latest news article:

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/fda-raises-safety-concerns-antibacterial-soaps-21232578>

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